" I believe that unless it possesses a certain unity of language a book is unreadable, and I want to be read It is neither affectation of style nor artistic taste that has led me to adhere as far as possible to the tone of the period and to prefer archaic forms of language whenever I thought they would be intelligible, it is because ideas are changed when words are changed and because one cannot substitute modern for ancient expressions without altering sentiments and characters"[1]

Each entry was therefore recorded as it might have been noted down by a contemporary in his journal , and as gossip vanes from place to place I imagined the diarist to be such a man as Edward Knowell, senior, before he began to take his family responsibilities too seriously, one who was more interested in events than in their historical significance, and who regarded authors, dramatists, and players as not less important members of the State than generals, politicians, and clergymen It was essentially, and by intention, a Londoner's Journal

At the same time I did not keep too rigidly to the idea of a personal diary It would be a criticism too captious and pedantic that no single man could have known every-thing here recorded Gossip at all times is elusive, and in attempting to chronicle the gossip of a past age the difficulty is not so much to find news as to discover how far any particular event was generally known or generally discussed, and in what mood From the years 1591 to 1594 few private letters survive by which general news can be checked, but from

1595 onwards,
when the letters of John Chamberlain and his friends, or of
Rowland Whyte to Sir Robert Sidney, become available,
and when the Satirists begin to comment on immediate events,
it is possible to estimate how far news, confidential or other-
wise, was generally circulated

The Elizabethan gentleman had an excellent nose for news
of any kind Far more was discussed than was ever committed

[1] *Lift of Joan of Arc* by Anatole France, translated by Winifred Stephens, 1925, vol i, Ixv